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### Deposited in DRO:

28 October 2016

### Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

### Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

### Citation for published item:

Gray, Patrick and Samely, Maurice (2019) 'Shakespeare and Henri Lefebvre's 'Right to the City': subjective alienation and mob violence in Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, and 2 Henry VI.', *Textual practice*, 33 (1). pp. 73-98.

### Further information on publisher's website:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1310755>

### Publisher's copyright statement:

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**Shakespeare and Henri Lefebvre's 'Right to the City':  
Subjective Alienation and Mob Violence in *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *2 Henry VI***

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**Abstract:**

In his treatise *The Right to the City*, published in Paris just before the student riots of 1968, Henri Lefebvre claims that inhabitants have a 'right to the city' which supersedes the rights of property owners and advocates 're-appropriation' of the city, resulting in 'collective ownership and management of space'. Lefebvre's radical proposals inspired his students to take more direct action, and present-day movements such as the Occupy protests continue to cite his concept of 'the right to the city' as their inspiration. Shakespeare for his part, however, in his history plays presents what amounts to a nightmare counterpoint to Lefebvre's dream. In *2 Henry VI*, an analogue of 'the right to the city' appears as might be called 'the right to the commons'. Far from bringing about any kind of 'concrete utopia', however, the Jack Cade Rebellion quickly degenerates into horrifying bloodshed. In *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare again presents what seems to be point-for-point opposition to anarchic populism such as Lefebvre's. Shakespeare and Lefebvre share some important common ground, however, in their sense that mob violence is a response to subjective alienation, distinct from any more objective deprivation. Within the Hegelian tradition, Charles Taylor, Francis Fukuyama, and Axel Honneth have written extensively on the desire for recognition as an engine of political conflict. Violence is not always coldly calculating, but instead, spurred on by an emotion: indignation. More than any material change in what Marx would call the 'conditions of production', Shakespeare's peasants and plebeians want to be recognized as worthy of respect; in the language of *Coriolanus*, they want their 'voices' to be heard. Riots and rebellions are their way of protecting that right.

**Keywords:**

Shakespeare; *Coriolanus*; *Julius Caesar*; *2 Henry VI*; Hegel; Marx; Lefebvre; utopia; alienation; protest; riot; republicanism

**Wordcount:**

12000 words, including endnotes.

## Shakespeare and Henri Lefebvre's 'Right to the City':

### Subjective Alienation and Mob Violence in *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *2 Henry VI*

In his treatise *The Right to the City*, written and published in Paris just before the student riots of 1968, Henri Lefebvre claims that inhabitants of an urban space have a 'right to the city' which supersedes the rights of property owners and advocates re-appropriation of the city, resulting in 'collective ownership and management of space'.<sup>1</sup> This transformation requires 'activation and mobilization of inhabitants', spurred on by a vision of an 'urgent utopia'.<sup>2</sup> In 1968, Lefebvre was a lecturer at the University of Nanterre, the epicentre of the unrest; he gave a class to two-thousand-odd students on modernity and everyday life, and his radical proposals seem to have inspired many of his students to take direct action. In an interview, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the student leaders, described him as a 'wonderful lecturer'.<sup>3</sup> 'He would seduce everybody', Cohn-Bendit recalled, 'just talk, telling anecdotes; he loved to talk and everybody loved his classes'. 'I didn't really know him personally', he explained; 'I was only one of many students in the audience. But his ideas on cultural revolution in everyday life, and on offering a different version of Marxism, influenced the Movement of March 22<sup>nd</sup>'.<sup>4</sup> Prominent initiatives from the 1990s onwards such as the British Reclaim the Streets (RTS) collective and the worldwide Occupy movement owe their ideological provenance to Lefebvre's work on space and the city, and a variety of other local movements, as well, expressly cite Lefebvre as their inspiration, including the South African shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo ([abahlali.org](http://abahlali.org)); the German Recht auf Stadt network ([rechtaufstadt.net](http://rechtaufstadt.net)); and, in the United States, the Right to the City Alliance ([righttothecity.org](http://righttothecity.org)).<sup>5</sup>

In one of his earliest plays, *2 Henry VI*, Shakespeare presents what seems, at least, to be a nightmare, dystopian counterpoint to Lefebvre's dream. In his representation of the Jack

Cade Rebellion, an analogue of the ‘right to the city’ appears as what might be called the ‘right to the commons’. Far from bringing about any kind of paradise, however, Cade’s political agitation quickly degenerates into horrifying civil strife. Later, in his depiction of the Roman Conflict of the Orders, Shakespeare seems once again to present what amounts to a point-for-point critique of the kind of populist reform of urban governance which Lefebvre proposes. In *Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony reveals to the crowd that Caesar has bequeathed them ‘all his walks, / His private arbours and new-planted orchards’ as ‘common pleasures’ (3.2.238–241).<sup>6</sup> The result is not ‘utopia’, however, but frightening mob violence, culminating in the on-stage murder of an innocent bystander. In *Coriolanus*, the plebeians band together, banish an aristocratic war-hero, and for a time enjoy a peaceful urban commonwealth. Under threat of war, however, they realize they are not self-sufficient; their ability to live in peace requires the protection of the patricians.

Shakespeare’s suspicion of armed popular uprising is not simply an expression of class prejudice, however. Communists such as Lefebvre are relatively optimistic about human nature; inclined to believe in the ‘perfectibility of man’, in the spirit of the Enlightenment or the French Revolution. Shakespeare in contrast is more Augustinian.<sup>7</sup> Human beings as such, of whatsoever social class, are unruly, self-interested, and prey to self-destructive passions: Hamlet’s ‘vicious mole of nature’ (1.4.24).<sup>8</sup> His plebeians, it is true, tend to be dim-witted and fickle. His patricians, however, tend to be arrogant and selfish. As Robert Miola explains, in his analysis of *Julius Caesar*, “Shakespeare’s portrayal of the fickle mob does not merely reflect anti-democratic prejudice or suggest the necessity for a strong ruler.” Seen in context, “the plebeians are the exact counterpart of the feckless Senate, the conspiring patricians, and, most important, the ambitious Caesar.” No one social class, still less, any one person, can be considered altogether “trustworthy.”<sup>9</sup>

Given the intrinsic imperfections of human nature, the best possible outcome of class conflict, as Shakespeare sees it, is neither tyranny, oligarchy, nor mob rule -- still less, an implausible Marxist utopia -- but instead an uneasy balance of power. As James Madison explains, in his celebrated defence of the American constitution, ‘Ambition must be made to counteract ambition’. Fear of the breakdown of civic order on the part of the aristocracy, coupled with fear of punishment on the part of the commoners, allows each class to restrain the potential excesses of the other. The king for his part keeps them unified, at least in theory, both as a talisman and as a power broker. In the popular imagination, the king serves as an imagined court of appeal for the claims of the poor against the injustices of the rich. Likewise, the king himself is kept in check by the watchful eye of the nobility. ‘It may be a reflection on human nature,’ Madison muses, ‘that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary’.<sup>10</sup>

### **1. The Politics of Recognition**

In the early 1990s, proponents of the politics of recognition began to argue that alongside material or economic deprivation, there is an additional, more powerful force driving social and political struggle: the desire for recognition. The starting-point of this ‘politics of recognition’ is Hegel’s dialectic of the development of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. At the beginning of the section on lordship and bondage, Hegel posits that ‘self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged’.<sup>11</sup> Charles Taylor re-articulates this argument in his seminal essay, ‘The Politics of Recognition’; as he explains there, ‘the genesis of the human mind is ... not monological, not something each person accomplishes

on his or her own, but dialogical'. Taylor's revival of Hegel set the stage for a more pervasive move which extends the application of Hegel's dialectic to a wide field of social groups.<sup>12</sup> 'A number of strands in contemporary politics', Taylor writes, 'turn on the need, sometimes the demand for *recognition*'. As examples of social movements driven by this desire, he draws attention more specifically to nationalism, feminism, and multiculturalism.<sup>13</sup> Advocates of these positions want something more than money or even legal powers of coercion: their more fundamental aim is for their narrative, their sense of themselves, to be respected. They want, in other words, a subjective change in the way they are perceived, alongside, emerging out of, but distinct from, any more objective economic reparations or institutional reform.

Writing around the same time, Francis Fukuyama and Axel Honneth place recognition at the centre not just of contemporary social struggle, but of the whole of human societal development. The desire for recognition, according to Fukuyama, is 'the motor of history'.<sup>14</sup> 'As interpreted by Alexandre Kojève', he writes, 'Hegel provides us with an alternative "mechanism" by which to understand the historical process, one based on the 'struggle for recognition'.<sup>15</sup> Likewise for Honneth, 'motives for social resistance and rebellion are formed in the context of moral experiences stemming from the violation of deeply rooted expectations regarding recognition'.<sup>16</sup> Honneth sees recognition as fundamental to the development of history: 'It is by way of the morally motivated struggles of social groups – their collective attempt to establish, institutionally and culturally, expanded forms of reciprocal recognition – that the normatively directional change of societies proceeds'.<sup>17</sup>

Turning back to Shakespeare for a moment, it is perhaps for this reason, the desire for recognition, that the plebeians in *Coriolanus* speak of their 'voices', rather than their 'votes'. Coriolanus baulks at the custom that those running for consul must petition the citizens in public for their acceptance. As one of the tribunes, Brutus, recalls,

I heard him swear  
 Were he to stand for consul, never would he  
 Appear i'th' market-place nor on him put  
 The napless vesture of humility,  
 Nor showing, as the manner is, his wounds  
 To th' people, beg their stinking breaths. (2.1.225-29)

As the other tribune, Sicinius, is quick to remind him, however, 'Sir, the people / Must have their voices, neither will they bate / One jot of ceremony' (2.2.138–9).<sup>18</sup> Conversation is integral to immediate, everyday intersubjective recognition, and it is for this reason that the citizens set such store by it. The 'voice' is a more visceral representation of the self than a 'vote'. In his *Politics*, Aristotle singles out language as proof that man is inextricably social: 'that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident,' he writes; "nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech' (1.2).<sup>19</sup>

From the perspective of Hegelian political philosophy, the traditional process of standing for consul which Coriolanus must endure in the marketplace amounts to a straightforward swap, so to speak, of interpersonal respect. He is to show the scars of his battle-wounds to all and sundry, and in exchange, in light of his evident military service, they will support his standing for consul. As the Third Citizen explains, 'If he show us his wounds and tell us his deeds [...] we must also tell him our noble acceptance of them. [...] Ingratitude is monstrous' (2.3.5–9). Coriolanus, however, struggles to understand the necessity of the custom. "'Twas never my desire yet', he tells one of the citizens, 'to trouble the poor with begging' (2.3.68-9). But the process is far from dispensable, given what it represents. By petitioning the citizens of Rome for their voices, Coriolanus is obliged to recognize, not

merely their role in the political system, but their very existence; their essential worth. The show of respect that he chafes at is an important safeguard against a dangerous subjective alienation. By attempting to avoid it, or else to undermine it with dismissive sarcasm, Coriolanus all-but-inevitably provokes the violent retaliation he incurs, leading ultimately to his being banished from the city.

## **2: The Right to the City**

Lefebvre's own historical touchstone is not, as it is for Shakespeare, ancient Rome, but instead, the Paris Commune of 1871, which he sees as a reaction against the reforms of Baron Haussman. Prefect of the Seine under Napoleon III, Baron Haussman demolished and rebuilt much of Paris. He tore down crowded, working-class neighbourhoods, full of crooked alleys, and replaced them with uniform buildings and broad boulevards, displacing, by his own estimation, some 350,000 inhabitants. His aims were political as well as aesthetic: the new city plan allowed freer movement of troops and artillery, including if necessary to subdue the Parisians themselves. As Lefebvre writes, the 'victorious bourgeoisie carved up the existing space and quartered, shattered, and rearranged it to suit its own requirements [...] this process has not stopped since, but still continues today'.<sup>20</sup> Visiting Fredric Jameson in California, Lefebvre found in Los Angeles an especially pronounced example of this ongoing marginalization of the masses, a city both 'detestable' and 'fascinating':

For a European it's appalling and unlivable. You can't get around without a car and you pay exorbitant sums to park it. [...] What fascinates and disgusts me are the streets of luxury shops with superb windows but which you can't enter into [...]



These streets are empty. And not far from there, you have a street, a neighbourhood, where 200,000 Salvadorian immigrants are exploited to death in cellars and lofts.<sup>21</sup>

For Lefebvre, space is not a neutral site or container for class conflict, but instead an object of that struggle; a social product which has itself become commodified. Urban centrality is at a premium, and it has come to be understood in terms of its exchange value, rather than its use value. Examples might include the controversial recent trend towards absentee foreign owners in New York and London, purchasing prime real estate in the urban centre as investments, and in the process driving up housing prices beyond what city workers can afford.<sup>22</sup> The frontier of the new class conflict, Lefebvre argues, ‘does not divide city and country but cuts across the urban phenomenon, between a dominated periphery and a dominating center’.<sup>23</sup>

For Lefebvre, the Paris Commune of 1871 represents a viable alternative. For seventy-odd days, Paris workers sympathetic to socialism came in from the *banlieues* to which they had been displaced, organized themselves in councils, and proclaimed their independence, until at last they were suppressed by the French military. In his pre-1968 book, *La Proclamation de la Commune*, written in 1965, Lefebvre exhorts the reader to ‘rehabilitate’ this ‘dream, otherwise utopian’, and presents the Commune as a model for ‘creative praxis’, despite its rapid collapse in its own time.<sup>24</sup> ‘Its failures are also victories, openings on to the future, a standard to be seized, a truth to be maintained. What was impossible for the Communards stays until this day impossible, and, by consequence, behoves us to realize its possibility’.<sup>25</sup> Writing in 1969, Lefebvre presents the student riots of 1968 as fulfilling this vision, even if only temporarily. ‘The students reoccupied the Latin Quarter; they re-appropriated the space that had been taken from them and reconquered it in a sharp struggle [...] A concrete utopia now proclaimed a unified culture transcending the

division of labor'.<sup>26</sup> He draws an explicit parallel between the two movements: 'In March 1871 as in May 1968, people who had come from the outlying areas into which they had been driven and where they had found nothing but a social void assembled and proceeded together toward the reconquest of the urban centers'.<sup>27</sup>

These moments are exceptional, however. More typically, Lefebvre explains, the proletariat has become 'dispensable', consigned to 'peripheral enclaves for dispersed enterprises'. The '*working class*, victim of segregation', has been 'expelled from the traditional city, deprived of a present and possible urban life'.<sup>28</sup> In its most basic sense, the right to the city means the right of those who work there to live there, as well, and to spend their leisure time there. In Lefebvre's terms, it is the right of those who *use* the city to *inhabit* the city. In its more comprehensive sense, however, the right to the city is political and social: it mandates that all classes, even the poorest, should be able to participate equally in the "life" of a city, a collective '*oeuvre*' akin to a work of art.<sup>29</sup> As Lefebvre sees it, 'to exclude the *urban* from groups, classes, individuals, is also to exclude them from civilization, if not from society itself. The *right to the city* legitimates the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organization'.<sup>30</sup>

### **3. Autogestion**

Mario Rui Martins reformulates Lefebvre's concept in more explicit terms: 'the right to the city' refers to 'the right to be present in all circuits of decision-making leading to the control and development of the organization of social space and therefore the refusal of having one's space-time controlled by external forces (state, capitalist urbanism, etc.)'.<sup>31</sup> This empowerment extends well beyond commonplace tokenistic forms of participation such as public information campaigns and community consultation processes: the kind of more

superficial engagement which, as we will see, Hegel recommends in his *Politics*. Instead, Lefebvre imagines all-pervasive power-sharing, a form of direct democracy which he calls *autogestion*. ‘Without *autogestion*’, he insists, “‘participation” has no meaning’.<sup>32</sup>

*Autogestion* means, literally, ‘self-management’, but it is perhaps best left untranslated, in order to preserve its association with radical leftism in Europe in the 1970s, including especially, workers taking control of factories. ‘Each time a social group (generally the productive workers) refuses to accept passively its conditions of existence, of life or survival, each time such a group forces itself not only to understand but to master its own conditions of existence, *autogestion* is occurring’.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to Stalinist Communism, the term implies a radical decentralization of power: direct democracy on a relatively small scale, as opposed to the totalizing sway of an overweening state. As Lefebvre explains, ‘The state cannot coexist peacefully with radicalized and generalized *autogestion*, as it must be put under the democratic control “of the base”. The state of *autogestion*, that is to say a State in which an internalized *autogestion* gains power, could only be a State that is withering away.’ Self-management is, in other words, ‘the end of politics’.<sup>34</sup>

Theoretically, as opposed to historically, Lefebvre’s model for this utopian ideal, one which he insists, despite appearances, it is in fact possible to render ‘concrete’ and permanent, is Rabelais’ account of the Abbey of Thélème, a unique, libertarian ‘monastery’ without clocks or vows, and open to women as well as men. As Rabelais explains,

‘All their life was laid out not by laws, statutes, or rules but according to their will and free choice. They got up out of bed when they saw fit, drank, ate, worked, slept when they came to feel like doing so; no one waked them, no one forced them either to drink or eat or to do anything else whatever. Thus Gargantua had established it. In

their rule was only this clause: DO WHAT YOU WILL [FAY CE QUE VOULDRAS].’

In his 1955 study, titled simply, *Rabelais*, Lefebvre argues that Rabelais presents here a ‘vision of the possible human,’ a ‘communist utopia,’ ‘an image of man fully developed, in a free society.’<sup>35</sup> This ‘vision’ is grounded in Rabelais’ relative optimism about human nature. Defending the plausibility of his Abbey, Rabelais maintains that ‘people who are free, well born, well bred, moving in honourable social circles, have by nature an instinct and goad which always impels them to virtuous deeds and holds them back from vice’.<sup>36</sup> Shakespeare in contrast is not so optimistic. As Hamlet says, somewhat cryptically, ‘virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it’ (3.1.116-8).<sup>37</sup> In *Measure for Measure*, Lucio stumbles across a friend of his, Claudio, being led away in chains, arrested on charges of fornication. ‘Why, how now, Claudio!’ he asks. ‘Whence comes this restraint?’ ‘From too much liberty, my Lucio, liberty,’ Claudio replies.

As surfeit is the father of much fast,  
So every scope by the immoderate use  
Turns to restraint. Our natures do pursue,  
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,  
A thirsty evil; and when we drink we die. (1.2)

Claudio’s simile here resembles St. Peter’s quotation from the Book of Proverbs in the New Testament, describing Christians who backslide into sin: ‘It is come unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is returned to his own vomit: and the sow that was washed, to the wallowing in the mire.’<sup>38</sup> Given this sense of human nature as fallen, imperfect, and

unreliable, it is little surprise that Shakespeare does not share Lefebvre's dreams of a secular utopia. Even Rousseau, intellectual cornerstone of the French Revolution, sees direct democracy of the kind Lefebvre proposes as hopelessly impracticable. 'If there were a people of gods', he suggests, 'they would be able to govern themselves democratically'. 'Such a perfect government', however, 'is not fitting for human beings'.<sup>39</sup>

Lefebvre was not aware of Bakhtin's study, *Rabelais and His World*; although written in the 1930s, it was not translated into French until 1970. His sense of Rabelais, however, corresponds fairly closely to Bakhtin's account of the 'carnavalesque'. As Andy Merrifield observes, Lefebvre's Marxism was 'Rabelaisian' in spirit, 'prioritizing "lived moments", irruptive acts of contestation: building occupations and street demos, free expressionist art and theatre, flying pickets, rent strikes, and a general strike'.<sup>40</sup> His ideal for revolutionary practice was explicitly the rural festival, especially the medieval French *Fête des Fous*, held annually on New Year's Day; an inversion of convention and an 'explosion of forces' which he believed ultimately 'tightened social links'.<sup>41</sup> In his study of the Paris Commune of 1871, Lefebvre describes it as 'first of all, an immense, grandiose festival'. A 'festival of the disinherited', he writes, describing the Communards, a 'festival of revolution', 'the grandest of modern times, unfurls itself for the first time in all its dramatic magnificent joy'.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4: Objective Alienation**

Shakespeare's representation of urban riots and peasant rebellion almost entirely contradicts Lefebvre's more optimistic vision, even at the cost of some distortion to the historical record. According to the Tudor historian Raphael Holinshed, one of Shakespeare's chief sources, the rebel leader Jack Cade was 'right pregnant of wit', 'sober in talke' and 'wise in reasoning', even if he was also 'arrogant in hart, and stiffe in opinion'.<sup>43</sup> Historically,

he sought to rein in the corruption of the king's counsellors and advisors, rather than to take action against the king himself. In Southwark his conduct was that of 'prohibiting to all his retinue, murder, rape, and robbery; by which colour of well meaning, he the more allured to him the harts of the common people.'<sup>44</sup> In the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), Cade's insurrection is again presented not without some sympathy, as an example of divine retribution against a king, given his irresponsible management of cruel officers.<sup>45</sup>

Like many of his contemporaries, however, Shakespeare conflates Cade's 1450 rebellion with that of Jack Straw and Wat Tyler in 1381. As the play suggests, Cade did indeed order the Lord High Treasurer, Lord Say, and his son-in-law to be beheaded, and his followers did place their heads on pikes and parade them through the streets of London, occasionally pushing them together to make them appear to kiss each other. As Brents Stirling points out, however, 'Most of the violence and outrage in Shakespeare's version of the Cade uprising came from the chronicle story of the earlier Peasants' Revolt,' including their wish to kill all lawyers, their opposition to literacy, the destruction of the Inns of Court, the destruction of state documents, and Cade's adoption of Wat Tyler's vow that 'all the laws of England should come forth out of his mouth'.<sup>46</sup> 'Away, burn all the records of the realm,' Cade cries; 'my mouth shall be the parliament of England' (4.7.11–13).<sup>47</sup> Richard Wilson sees Cade as 'metamorphosed' here into 'a cruel, barbaric lout, whose slogan is "kill and knock down", and whose story, as "the architect of disorder", is one long orgy of scatological clowning, arson, and homicide, fuelled by an infantile hatred of literacy and law'.<sup>48</sup>

In keeping with Lefebvre's sense of protest as a kind of 'festival', Francois Laroque describes Shakespeare's Cade's speeches as 'inspired by the vein of parodic eloquence that a Lord of Misrule would favour during the Christmas festival', and Cade himself as 'a Carnival king whose reign ushers in the era of a world set upside down'.<sup>49</sup> What Lefebvre presents as joyous and liberating, however, Shakespeare presents in contrast as segueing rapidly from

funny to frightening; even horrifying; an outbreak of senseless and unpredictable violence. One incident stands out: Cade and his men execute the otherwise-innocent Clerk of Chartham simply for being able to read and write. Likewise in *Julius Caesar*, an angry mob abruptly and pointlessly slaughters the poet Cinna, merely because his name resembles that of a senator, Cinna, who was one of the conspirators against Caesar. As in Plato's *Republic*, the masses seem hardly capable of reason. In Brutus's funeral oration, for example, defending his assassination of Caesar, he exhorts the crowd to see themselves as 'free men' (3.2.24) and urges them to embrace the longstanding principles of the Roman Republic, founded in the aftermath of the expulsion of the Tarquins. Their response is telling: clean contrary to Brutus's premises, they propose crowning Brutus king, as they had earlier tried to do to Caesar: 'Caesar's better parts / Shall be crown'd in Brutus' (3.2.51–2).

Despite their incapacity for strict logic, however, Shakespeare's rioters are not entirely foolish or wrongheaded. Their grievances have merit. The turning point in Antony's funeral oration, after which the crowd breaks out in violence against the conspirators against Caesar, is his reading of Caesar's will, in which, Antony claims, Caesar distributes his money and land to the citizens of Rome: 'To every Roman citizen he gives, / To every several man, seventy-five drachmas', and so on (3.2.234–5). Shakespeare evokes here the populism by which, as Montaigne says, 'Caesar became Caesar'.<sup>50</sup> The equivalent of the enclosure crisis in Caesar's Rome was the rise of vast plantations or *latifundia*, driving traditional smallholders out of business by taking advantage of slave labour and economies of scale; dispossessed poor ended up landless in Rome, much as they did in Shakespeare's London, and dependent on government largesse. Caesar's political success reflected his willingness to cater to the interest of this new social class; despite the objections of rival *optimates* such as Cato and Brutus, he insisted on the provision of what we would now call welfare: Juvenal's 'bread and circuses'. The same tension reappears in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, where the

focus of the debate is explicitly the dole: the traditional handout of a daily measure of free grain to Roman citizens. In keeping with the ancient Conflict of the Orders, Coriolanus, an aristocrat, balks at the very concept of giving away free food to the poor: ‘corn o’th’storehouse gratis, as ‘twas used / Sometime in Greece’ (3.1.115-6).

The Roman food riots which Shakespeare depicts in *Coriolanus* had their counterpart in his own early modern England. Buchanan Sharp cites at least forty riots in England between 1586 and 1631, ‘all of which were related in some way to the state of the food market’.<sup>51</sup> The other main cause of riots was the practice of ‘enclosure’. As Alan Everitt explains, ‘important though the labourer’s individual smallholding was, the vital factor in his fortunes was his rights of common’, especially ‘his grazing rights on common pastures’. Other crucial goods dependent on these traditional privileges included stone, coal, peat, firewood, timber, game, fish, fruit, herbs, and berries. ‘Poor though they seem, these rights alone added a few simple graces to an otherwise bare existence, and bred in the labourer a sense of hope and independence’. As Everitt notes, however, ‘Such an economy was peculiarly vulnerable ... to the new economic forces of the period’.<sup>52</sup> In the years comprising Shakespeare’s own lifetime, Roger B. Manning identifies hundreds of riots in England ‘protesting enclosures of commons and wastes, drainage of fens and disafforestation’.<sup>53</sup>

Shakespeare touches on this nerve of controversy when Antony tells the Roman crowd, in his peroration, that Caesar has left them ‘his walks, / His private arbours and new-planted orchards’, to them and their heirs ‘for ever’, as ‘common pleasures’ (3.2.238–241). Jack Cade addresses the problem even more directly when he vows, ‘all the realm shall be in common; and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass’ (4.2.63–4). ‘All things’, he repeats, ‘shall be in common’ (4.7.16). In his insistence on this point, Cade echoes the demands of Wat Tyler and the earlier Peasants’ Revolt. In Holinshed’s account, Tyler demands of the king that ‘all warrens, waters, parks, and woods should be common, so that as well poore as



rich might freeleie in any place wheresoeuer practise fishing in ponds, pooles, rivers, or any waters, and might hunt deere in forrests and parkes, and the hare in the fields.’<sup>54</sup>

For Shakespeare’s contemporaries, the equivalent of Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city’ was what might be called a ‘right to the commons’. Like Lefebvre’s Paris workers, driven out from the city centre to the *banlieues*, Shakespeare’s peasants are aggrieved to find themselves shut out of land which they had traditionally been allowed to use, and which they see as integral to their everyday quality of life. They perceive their exclusion as an injustice, even if it is, strictly speaking, legal. In both cases, the exchange value of a space to property owners is allowed to supersede its use value to would-be inhabitants, prompting indignation and violent resistance. The deprivation which provokes working-class riot and rebellion in Shakespeare’s plays is not merely material, however, but also emotional. As Yves-Marie Bercé explains, ‘The trigger of revolt is not destitution, but injustice – and not objective injustice, but the conviction of it.’<sup>55</sup> Shakespeare’s mobs are responding to insult, as well as injury; their violence is not so much a calculated tactic as it is a more visceral reaction to their sense of being subjected to high-handed contempt. In other words, they are responding to *subjective* as well as *objective* alienation. And on this point, the signal importance of subjective alienation, as distinct from objective, Shakespeare and Lefebvre share some important common ground.

### **5: Subjective Alienation**

In marked contrast to the orthodox or, as he called it, ‘dogmatic’ Marxism of his day, -- the ‘party line’, literally, coming out of the Soviet Union -- Lefebvre was at pains to insist that the alienation of the working class was more than merely economic. Until the late 1950s, Lefebvre was a member of the French Communist Party, which at that time, in keeping with

its staunch defence of Stalinism, posited a clear distinction between ‘early’ and ‘late’ Marx. Marx’s early works were seen as tainted by Hegelian idealism, too humanist and too philosophical, whereas his later works were cast as more reliably materialist and economic: ‘scientific’.<sup>56</sup> Lefebvre in contrast advocated a holistic reading of Marx, one that in time led him to break ties with the Party. ‘The fact that economic science and political action had *superseded* speculative philosophy fostered the false conclusion’, he complained, ‘that Marx had abandoned any conception of the philosophical world’.<sup>57</sup>

Marx articulates his theory of ‘alienation’ most fully in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. The origins of his later emphasis on economic alienation are already evident here in his sense that private property is both ‘the *product* of alienated labor’ and ‘the *means* by which labor alienates itself’.<sup>58</sup> Yet the *Manuscripts* also support Lefebvre’s more Hegelian sense of Marx’s thought, insofar as Marx claims here that the alienation of the worker includes his alienation from other men. ‘For Marx’, Lefebvre writes, ‘the alienation of the worker by fragmented labour and machines is only one aspect of a larger – a total – alienation which is inherent in capitalist society and in man’s exploitation of man’.<sup>59</sup> ‘Workers do not only have a life in the workplace’, Lefebvre argues; ‘they have a social life, family life, political life; they have experiences outside the domain of labor’.<sup>60</sup> There is ‘alienation in leisure just as in work’.<sup>61</sup>

Lefebvre attributes much of the subjective alienation of everyday life to individuals’ objective relation in space. In being pushed out of the urban centre, the common man is deprived, not only of potential economic gain, but also of the shared social and political life necessary to become a complete or what Lefebvre calls a ‘total’ human being. ‘The total man’, Lefebvre writes, ‘is “de-alienated” man’. ‘Human alienation will end with “the return of man to himself”, that is to say in the unity of all the elements of the human’.<sup>62</sup> As Andy Merrifield explains, ‘the total man represents a goal, an ideal, a possibility, not a historical

fact; it may never become an actual fact'.<sup>63</sup> For Lefebvre, however, the unattainability of the aim he posits seems to be relatively unimportant. 'Utopia never realizes itself', he concedes, 'yet it is indispensable for stimulating change.'<sup>64</sup>

The polar opposite of Lefebvre's 'de-alienated man' is what Hegel calls 'the rabble' (*der Pöbel*). 'When a large mass of people sinks below the level of a certain standard of living', Hegel maintains, 'that feeling of right, integrity, and honour which comes from supporting oneself by one's own activity and work is lost. This leads to the creation of a *rabble*' (§ 244).<sup>65</sup> This definition, taken from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, acknowledges that poverty is fundamentally economic: it begins when people find themselves below what Hegel refers to as 'a certain standard of living'. When the poor become what he calls a 'rabble', however, it is the result of a more subjective change: the loss of 'that feeling of right, integrity, and honour which comes from supporting oneself by one's own activity and work'. 'Poverty in itself', he argues, 'does not reduce people to a rabble; a rabble is created only by the disposition associated with poverty, by inward rebellion against the rich, against society, against government, etc.' (§ 244A).

For Hegel, poverty has 'a subjective aspect' which 'requires *subjective* help, both with regard to the *particular* circumstances and with regard to emotion and love' (§ 242). Using 'direct means' to 'maintain the increasingly impoverished mass at its normal standard of living' is not enough; instead, the poor need something that gives them a 'feeling of self-sufficiency and honour' (§ 245). That is to say, simply handing out welfare checks is not an adequate or advisable solution to the problem of poverty, as Hegel sees it. In addition, the poor need to feel that they are participants in civil society, part of a political unity. They need to feel invested in a common good like that described by Lefebvre when he speaks of the urban life of a city as an *oeuvre*, a collective work of art.

Otherwise, Hegel argues, ‘it follows that those who are dependent on contingency become frivolous and lazy [...] This in turn gives rise to the evil that the rabble do not have sufficient honour to gain their livelihood through their own work, yet claim that they have a right to receive their livelihood’ (§ 244A). Of course, it is not necessarily the fault of the poor that they are in poverty. If poverty arose from a state of nature, Hegel observes, it would not be possible to complain against it: ‘No one can assert a right against *nature*,’ he writes, ‘but within the conditions of *society* hardship at once assumes the form of a wrong inflicted on this or that class’ (§ 244, emphasis added). In civil society, Hegel maintains, poverty is a deliberate wrong inflicted on a class. Yet his thought seems at odds with itself. As noted, in the preceding paragraph, Hegel attacks the rabble for ‘claiming that they have a right to receive their livelihood’ while at the same time being too lazy to earn it. The cognitive dissonance is startling: within the space of a few lines, Hegel both condemns the poor for their obstreperous behaviour and accepts that they have entirely legitimate reasons for their ‘inward rebellion’.

The contentious critical reception of Shakespeare’s ambiguous representation of working-class political violence suggests that he may have felt a similar ambivalence, seeing it simultaneously, like Hegel, as both wrong-headed and justified. Stephen Greenblatt argues that ‘Shakespeare depicts Cade’s rebellion as a grotesque and sinister farce, the archetypal lower class revolt both in its motives and in its ludicrousness’.<sup>66</sup> Phyllis Rackin sees Shakespeare’s representation of Cade’s rebellion as ‘tainted’ by ‘comedy’, despite ‘the vividness of Cade’s characterization and the real social ills his rebellion addresses’.<sup>67</sup> Richard Helgerson claims that Shakespeare’s ‘mockery of Jack Cade, in particular,’ is ‘open and unmistakable ... Even his followers mock him’. Helgerson goes on to argue that ‘the part was likely enacted by the company’s clown’, and that ‘Cade and his followers were associated with carnival and carnivalesque misrule’.<sup>68</sup> In several articles, however, as well as

his recent book, *Radical Shakespeare*, Chris Fitter argues for a very different sense of Shakespeare's underlying political sympathies. 'Shakespeare's treatment of popular rising in this play [2 *Henry VI*]', Fitter proposes, 'reveals a generous and complex vision, which, though conditioned by awareness of possible anarchic degeneration, and pessimism about its larger transformative possibilities given the phenomenon of leadership betrayal, nonetheless includes – *pace* the dominant critical tradition – conditional endorsement of armed uprising.'<sup>69</sup> Like Fitter, Ronda Arab sees the rebels as 'remarkably appealing'. 'Part of the attraction of the rebels in 2 *Henry VI* is their merry carnival-like approach to subverting the social order.' That said, however, 'never does their festive merriment obscure their horrific ruthlessness.'<sup>70</sup> Arab aligns herself in the end with Michael Hattaway's sense of the play's 'double perspective': the audience watches the rebellion 'with a degree of horror but also with a degree of glee as the privileged get their comeuppance.'<sup>71</sup>

Hegel's ambivalence about the place of the poor may perhaps shed some light by analogy on Shakespeare's thought. Like Hegel, Shakespeare seems to acknowledge, even if only indirectly, the legitimacy of the grievances of what Hegel would call 'the rabble'. His sympathy for their plight dissipates, however, when they turn to violence. *Pace* Fitter, for Shakespeare, as for Hegel, armed popular uprising is a symptom of a failure of aristocratic governance, rather than itself a solution to that problem. In other words, for Shakespeare, as for Hegel, the ideal political response to the discontent of the poor is not for the poor themselves to take action; not riot or rebellion; but instead, for those in authority to prevent the subjective alienation which gives rise to such mob violence in the first place. If the elite are sufficiently attentive, responsive, and respectful, then the vast, potentially-unmanageable public Coriolanus dismisses as unworthy of appeasement, 'the many-headed multitude' (2.3.15-16), has no cause to become restive, unruly, and dangerous, as it does, predictably enough, in Coriolanus' Rome, in reaction to his insistent insults and scorn, or in 2 *Henry VI*,

in the wake of the prolonged neglect and *de facto* abdication of their feckless king, Henry VI. Ritual recognition of the fellow humanity of the masses; public engagement acknowledging their co-existence; these simple, largely symbolic gestures serve as the proverbial ‘sop to Cerberus’, preventing popular agitation against the existing political order. We today may be inclined, like Lefebvre, to see working-class riot and rebellion as heroic. For Shakespeare, however, this kind of mob violence is a social ill, akin to civil war.

## 6: Hegel’s Politics

In his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel lays out the structure of a political state designed, among other things, to prevent the subjective alienation of the poor – although his notorious hostility to democracy may at first suggest otherwise.<sup>72</sup> In Hegel’s system, the sovereign comprises not only the hereditary monarch, but also individuals who hold ‘the highest advisory offices’ (§§ 280, 283). These advisors submit proposals to the monarch, which he then ratifies (§ 283). Although technically, then, a constitutional monarchy, as Michael Hardimon observes, in Hegel’s proposed state, ‘the real work of governing’ is carried out not by the king, but by civil servants.<sup>73</sup> These positions, moreover, may be filled by anyone: ‘knowledge and proof of ability’ is the sole condition of appointment, which ‘guarantees every citizen the possibility of joining’ (§291). In this limited sense, Hegel believes that *anyone* should be eligible to enter government.

What Hegel does not believe, however, is that *everyone* should play a part in the affairs of state, as all citizens do in a democracy, electing leaders on the basis of ideological platforms. Hegel believes such universal participation in government is ill-advised. ‘The idea that everyone should participate in the concerns of the state entails the further assumption that *everyone is an expert on such matters*’ (§308R). Moreover, ‘the electorate becomes

*indifferent* in view of the fact that a single vote has little effect when numbers are so large' (§311R). Given that relatively few people participate directly in government, alienation might easily set in; a danger Hegel acknowledges. The elected deputies that make their way into the legislative power do, however, have some influence in the formulation of policy. They are able to provide state officials with extra insight into 'the more urgent and specialized needs and deficiencies which they see in concrete form before their eyes' among the people they represent (§301R). They 'uphold' the interests of the individual 'in an assembly which deals with universal issues' (§ 309R), and they 'participate' in the government's 'knowledge, deliberations, and decisions on matters of universal concern' (§ 314).

Nevertheless, the role of these elected deputies is not primarily to assist in governing. 'The highest officials within the state', Hegel argues, 'are able to do what is best even without the Estates, just as they must continue to do what is best when the Estates are in session' (§ 301R). Policy, again, in Hegel's system is formulated by civil servants, rather than elected representatives, and passed on to the monarch for approval, rather than the legislature. The Estates serve primarily as a '*mediating organ*', whose distinctive function is to ensure that 'the moment of *formal* freedom attains its right in relation to those members of civil society who have no share in government' (§§ 302, 314). That is to say, in plainer language, the core purpose of the Estates is not in fact to legislate at all, but instead to give the disenfranchised masses a feeling of connection to processes which they do not in any sense directly or even indirectly influence. To achieve this end, the Estates deputies participate in a 'forum for live exchanges and collective deliberations in which the participants [government officials and Estates deputies] instruct and convince one another' (§ 309). The aim of these exchanges is not to affect policy, but instead and more simply to help the public feel less alienated from their own government. 'The determination of the Estates as an institution does

not require them to achieve optimum results in their deliberations and decisions on the business of the state *in itself*, for their role in this respect is purely accessory' (§314).

Public debate of this kind, Hegel maintained in his lectures, would allow state powers to 'remain in touch' with public opinion and 'afford a great spectacle of outstanding educational value to the citizens' (§315A). By 'ensuring that the power of the sovereign does not appear as an isolated extreme', the Estates in theory at least would prevent the public from becoming 'a massive power in opposition to the organic state' (§ 302). We may debate today the merits of this hypothetical safeguard against the danger of subjective alienation. What Hegel shares with Lefebvre, however, as well as Shakespeare, is a sense of a potential problem. When the masses feel estranged from the authorities who handle the real business of government, mob violence is imminent. The excluded great unwashed, so to speak, are likely to reassert a balance of power through riot and rebellion, if only to recover their own sense that they are recognized as worthy of respect.

## **7. Riot and Rebellion**

Like Shakespeare, Hegel singles out Rome as a place where the poor, being excluded altogether from the political processes of their own state, were allowed to degenerate into what he describes as a 'corrupt rabble' (§ 357) In the late Republic and early Empire, the common people were increasingly shut out of any meaningful political participation. The poor could not obtain redress of their grievances, including especially an end to recurrent food shortages.<sup>74</sup> As P. A. Brunt observes, the constitution came to operate in practice 'only in the interest of the ruling class'.<sup>75</sup> Reformers therefore had to use force, 'or at least to create conditions in which the senate had reason to fear its use'.<sup>76</sup> Thomas Africa draws attention more specifically to the importance of the Circus as a venue for public dissent. 'The Roman



commons could only petition the emperor through mass demonstrations,’ he explains. ‘If he failed to heed their demands, they sometimes resorted to violence’.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, ‘most emperors were receptive to public opinion as represented by the multitude in the Circus’.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, in the early Republic, before the tribunes were established to protect the plebeians, urban violence was the means of last resort; the only remaining point of leverage in the Conflict of the Orders. In *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare dramatizes this period of transition. The people ‘vented their complainings’, Martius explains, and a ‘petition’ was granted them, ‘a strange one, / To break the heart of generosity / And make bold power look pale’ (1.1.205-7). The concession turns out to be ‘Five tribunes to defend their vulgar wisdoms, / Of their own choice’ (1.1.210-11).

Understanding riot and rebellion as a reaction against alienation helps to make sense of Jack Cade’s and his companions’ murderous opposition to literacy. In a well-known line, Dick the Butcher declares that the first thing the rebels will do is ‘kill all the lawyers’ (4.2.71). But he does not stop there: ‘All scholars, lawyers, courtiers, gentlemen’ are to be put to death (4.4.35–36). The clerk of Chartham is accordingly hanged ‘with his pen and inkhorn about his neck’ (4.2.101). The scene resembles the notorious Killing Fields of the Khmer Rouge, where supposed intellectuals were put to death for little more than, for instance, being known to use reading glasses.<sup>79</sup> Even if horrifying, however, the rebellion’s impulse to kill all the literate is more than merely ‘gross and miserable ignorance’ (4.2.158), as Stafford describes it. The commons are angry because they feel that their inability to read and write unfairly excludes them from full and equal participation in the political process. They are in the dark, estranged from their own state; poverty cuts them off from the intellectual capital they need even to understand the law, much less to manipulate it in their own interest. Cade deplores that parchment, ‘being scribbled o’er, should undo a man’ (4.2.74). Here again, Shakespeare conflates Cade’s Rebellion with the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381. As I. M. W.

Harvey observes, by the fifteenth century ‘nearly every rebel leader [...] had his scribe or secretary and a messenger service.’<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the spirit of the complaint might be said to still stand. Education remained in Shakespeare’s own lifetime, as today, a velvet rope between the haves and the have-nots.

‘Dost thou use to write thy name?’ Cade asks the clerk, ‘Or hast thou a mark to thyself, like an honest plain-dealing man?’ (4.2.93–95) In court, the ability to read could be literally life-saving. Among Cade’s denunciations of Lord Saye appears the charge that ‘thou hast put [poor men] in prison, and because they could not read thou hast hanged them’ (4.7.39–41). Cade refers here to a legal procedure known as the ‘benefit of clergy’ whereby condemned criminals could escape the death penalty if they could recite the ‘neck verse’, Psalm 51.1. Ben Jonson is a famous example of a member of the educated class saved by an appeal to this loophole, and it was surprisingly widespread. David Cressy refers us to the Middlesex records, where it is written that in the reign of Elizabeth 32% of capital felons successfully pleaded benefit of clergy in this manner.<sup>81</sup> It is this kind of unfair practice, then, which prompts Shakespeare’s peasants’ hatred here of the literate.

For the common people of Shakespeare’s England, violent agitation is a means to register political opposition, when all other efforts at participation in their own governance seem futile. Earlier in the play, before Cade’s revolt, the commons demand that the Duke of Suffolk ‘straight be done to death, / Or banished fair England’s territories’. ‘An answer from the King’, comes the shout, ‘or we will all break in!’ (3.2.244–5, 278) The king professes that he already purposed to act ‘as they do entreat’; nonetheless, Suffolk’s banishment does seem to require their final push. As the commoners’ army faces the Staffords’, Cade assures Dick that ‘then are we in order when we are most out of order’ (4.2.178–9). The comment could easily come across as a passing joke, but it pierces to the heart of the matter: it is precisely in

*disorder* that the commons are most effective politically. They enter the theatre of political authority – the realm of order – only when they rebel.

### **8: The Language of the ‘Educated Middle Class’**

In his *Politics*, Hegel expresses some concern about the language of the ‘educated middle class’, that is, the class which tends to become civil servants. ‘Alienated from the people, officials become, by reason of their skill, themselves the object of the people’s fear; even the way they talk strikes the ears of citizens as gibberish, a kind of thieves’ slang.’ It is vital, therefore, that ministers engaged in public debate in the assemblies of the Estates be, as Thom Brooks explains, ‘forced to make a case for political decisions that non-experts can understand.’<sup>82</sup> As Hegel insists, ‘Officials must ... accustom themselves to a popular approach, to popular language, and seek to overcome the difficulties this occasions them.’<sup>83</sup>

In keeping with Hegel’s sense of a political risk, in *Julius Caesar*, as well as *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare illustrates the grave importance of the tone in which the political elite communicate with the people. In each play, Shakespeare draws a pointed contrast between the public speeches of two very different aristocratic speakers: Brutus as opposed to Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* and Menenius as opposed to Coriolanus in *Coriolanus*. And in both cases, *manner* proves just as important, if not more so, than *matter*.

*Coriolanus*, in particular, begins with a sharp contrast between Menenius and Coriolanus. The play opens with the plebeians in arms, demanding lower food prices: ‘corn at their own rates’ (1.1.183). In responding to this riot, both aristocrats want the same objective result, the status quo. Coriolanus, however, badly botches the subjective diplomacy necessary to maintain it. Menenius is the first to address the angry mob, and he is immediately well-received, welcomed by the rioters as ‘one that hath always loved the people’ (1.1.46-7). After

some conversation, he is able to calm them and begin to reorient their anger towards the enemies of Rome; calm them, that is, until Coriolanus arrives, who immediately denounces the crowd as ‘dissentious rogues’. After a long tirade, heaping insult upon insult, Coriolanus does not stay for an answer, but instead ignores the on-stage crowd altogether and speaks solely to Menenius. Finally he turns and dismisses them outright: ‘Go, get you home, you fragments!’ (1.1.217).

Menenius’ interaction with the restive plebeians could easily serve as a model of the kind of public engagement which Hegel sees as crucial to the prevention of subjective alienation of the poor. He hears their complaints patiently, addresses them as his ‘countrymen’ (1.1.50), ‘friends’ (1.1.57, 60), ‘neighbors’ (1.1.57), even ‘masters’ (1.1.58), and justifies the current price of grain by recounting what he calls, with typical, self-deprecating humour, ‘a pretty tale’ (1.1.85). Using a humorous, allegorical fable, Menenius compares the state to the body and the aristocracy to the belly, an organ which seems useless but in fact carries out an important task of redistribution. He acknowledges the people’s ‘suffering’ (1.1.62) and insists repeatedly that the patricians feel ‘most charitable care’ towards them (1.1.60); the ‘helms o’th’state,’ he maintains, ‘care for you like fathers’ (1.1.72).

Coriolanus in contrast makes no such concessions. Rather than patiently explaining the reasons of state, as Menenius does, he mocks the very idea that the people of Rome might ‘sit by the fire and presume to know / What’s done in the Capitol’ (1.1.186-7). ‘Hang ‘em!’ he repeatedly exclaims (1.1.185, 199; cp. 1.1.176). ‘Nay,’ Menenius replies, ‘they are almost thoroughly persuaded’ (1.1.196). Towards the beginning of the scene, before Menenius tells his fable of the belly, one of the citizens protests, ‘you must not think fob off our disgrace with a tale’ (1.1.89). In a sense, though, Menenius does exactly that. Through the kind of public outreach Hegel prescribes, an explanation of policy in plain language, he is able to

appease the people of Rome without actually conceding to any of their material demands. Coriolanus in contrast aggravates the problem by his refusal as he says to ‘flatter’ the plebeians (1.1.162). ‘We have ever your good word’ (1.1.161), one of the citizens remarks, sarcastically. Taken as a whole, what the scene suggests is that what the citizens want, even more than ‘corn gratis’ (3.1.126), is a ‘good word’. As Menenius explains to Coriolanus, later on, after he has once again offended the plebeians, ‘they have pardons, being asked, as free / As words to little purpose’ (3.2.88-9). That is to say, bluntly put, recognition is more important to the poor than actual reform.

Another version of this contrast between engaging the public and estranging it appears in *Julius Caesar*, in the rival funeral orations of Brutus and Mark Antony. Plutarch records that Brutus’ two speeches did not convince the people. The first was received with ‘great silence’; it seemed that the people ‘neither greatly reproved, nor allowed the fact’ of the murder.<sup>84</sup> During the second, ‘they gave him quiet audience: howbeit, immediately after, they showed that they were not all contented with the murder’.<sup>85</sup> In Shakespeare’s version, Brutus is too calm, too abstract, too aloof, and too self-satisfied. As Patrick Gray suggests, Brutus takes too much pride in his sense of himself as an intellectual to deign to explain his actions in terms that his audience can understand. ‘Conceding nothing to what we might now call optics, pausing at no point for any tug on the proverbial heart-strings, Brutus instead presses *hoi polloi* with challenging, elliptical counterfactuals and conditionals, in the manner of a present-day analytic philosopher. “Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all freemen?” (3.2.22-4).’<sup>86</sup> Hegel’s sense that the language of the educated may seem merely ‘gibberish’ to the masses is in this case hauntingly apt. ‘If... if then ... this is my answer’: Brutus’s brusque, interlocking ‘if ... then’ statements leave his audience merely confused. ‘Let him be Caesar’ (3.2.51), they cry.

Like Menenius, telling his ‘pretty tale,’ Antony takes pains in contrast to incorporate concrete illustrations of his claims. Brutus talks about love, valour, and ambition; Antony says instead that Caesar filled Rome’s coffers; he wept when the poor cried; he refused the crown when it was offered. Antony also takes advantage of visual effects. In *Coriolanus*, Volumnia urges her son to go to the people hat in hand, kneeling before them. ‘For in such business,’ she explains, ‘Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th’ignorant / More learned than the ears’ (3.2.76-8). As if with this principle in mind, Antony shows the people the rents in Caesar’s cloak, made by the knives of the conspirators; finally, Caesar’s body itself. He is not squeamish about showing emotion, as Brutus is: ‘poor soul,’ one of the citizens remarks, ‘his eyes are red with weeping’ (3.2.164). Antony, however, is more cold-blooded than he lets on. ‘Now let it work,’ he says, in an aside; ‘Mischief, thou art afoot’ (3.2.251). His populism is disingenuous. Antony uses the promises in Caesar’s will, the money and the land which he claims Caesar grants to the people, as a means to provoke a riot; the very next scene, however, shows him scheming ‘how to cut off some charge in [these] legacies’ (4.1.9). Nevertheless, his methods are effective. By stepping down from the rostrum and mixing with the people, speaking to them in their own fashion, Antony is able to manipulate them to his own ends. Like Henry V, he understands the importance of ‘the common touch’.

## **9. The Monarch at War**

Like most of his contemporaries, Shakespeare seems to be in favour of the classical ideal of ‘mixed government’ popularized by Polybius and Cicero, one which combines monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy.<sup>87</sup> What need, however, of a king? Shakespeare, like Hegel, seems to see the active presence of a hereditary monarch as a binding influence, crucial to forestalling the subjective alienation of the poor.<sup>88</sup> In defence of monarchy, Hegel

argues that ‘*without* its monarch and that *articulation* of the whole which is necessarily and immediately associated with monarchy, the *people* is a formless mass’ (PR §279R). In other words, a people without a king is effectively a rabble. The monarch is the state personified: ‘the *actual unity* of the state’ (PR §281). Shakespeare for his part suggests such a role for the monarch in the pointed contrast that he draws between Henry V and his son, Henry VI. In Shakespeare’s first tetralogy of history plays, Henry VI’s naïve, feeble dereliction of his duties creates a power vacuum which is rapidly filled by scheming rival nobles, leading to civil war and, indirectly, through the efforts of the Duke of York, the revolt of the commons under the leadership of Jack Cade. To put an end to that rebellion, Old Clifford must evoke the memory, in contrast, of Henry VI’s father, Henry V: ‘The name of Henry the Fifth hailes them to a hundred mischiefs,’ Cade laments, ‘and makes them leave me desolate’ (4.8.56).

How exactly, however, does the king unify the state? Hegel looks to war, which the monarch alone may lead. ‘[The state’s] relationship with other states therefore comes under the *power of the sovereign*, who therefore has direct and sole responsibility for the command of the armed forces, [...] for making war and peace.’ (PR §329) ‘Not only do peoples emerge from wars with added strength,’ Hegel argues, ‘but nations troubled by civil dissension gain internal peace as a result of wars with their external enemies’ (PR §324A). ‘This is apparent,’ he adds, ‘in various occurrences in history, as when successful wars have averted internal unrest and consolidated the internal power of the state’ (§ 324R). To this sentence Allen Wood adds in a note: ‘Perhaps an allusion to the dying words of Shakespeare’s King Henry IV.’<sup>89</sup> ‘Be it thy course,’ Henry IV tells his son, ‘to busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels’ (4.5.212-3).<sup>90</sup> The connection is not altogether implausible; Hegel is known to have had a ‘conversant’ knowledge of Shakespeare’s works, even composing an alternative version of a scene from *Julius Caesar* when he was a teenager.<sup>91</sup> Wars of foreign conquest are not much

to our taste today; to Shakespeare, however, as well as Hegel, they seem to have been preferable to civil war at home.

## **10. Conclusion**

In sum, Shakespeare, like Hegel, seems to favour the kind of mixed government advocated by Polybius and Cicero, incorporating elements of monarchy and aristocracy, as well as democracy. In this sense, he is closer to Hegel than to Marx – Lefebvre’s professed intellectual guiding light. Nonetheless, precisely here, in their surprising resemblance to Hegel, it is possible to discern some common ground between Shakespeare and Lefebvre after all. Both see working-class mob violence as a response to alienation: alienation which is as much subjective as objective. Shakespeare’s rebels and rioters are responding to a sense of disrespect and disempowerment, as much as they are to any more material economic deprivation. Within the Hegelian tradition, Charles Taylor, Francis Fukuyama, and Axel Honneth have written extensively on the desire for recognition as an engine of political conflict. Violence is not always coldly calculating, but instead, and more often, as they see it, spurred on by an emotion: indignation. Shakespeare’s peasants and plebeians want to be recognized as part of the political process, even if their role is only relatively limited: in the language of *Coriolanus*, they want their ‘voices’ to be heard. Riots and rebellions are their way of reasserting and protecting that right.

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The authors would like to thank Thom Brooks for sharing his expertise on Hegel and Marx, as well as Ann Brooks and David Lemmings for the opportunity to present an early version of this essay as part of a panel on Lefebvre and the right to the city at the University of Geneva.

<sup>1</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la Ville: Suivi de Espace et Politique* (Paris: Anthropos, 1968), trans. E. Kofman and E. Lebas, in *Writings on Cities*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 63 – 181; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Cohn-Bendit was until 2014 a MEP for Europe Écologie – Les Verts/ALE (‘Alliance Libre Européenne’, i.e. ‘Free European Alliance’ (FEA) in English).

<sup>4</sup> Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), interview with author, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Chris Butler, *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial Politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 147. The Right to the City Alliance has 1.1 million Facebook likes and cites Lefebvre’s *Right to the City* as ‘a key resource and touchstone’. The Abahlali baseMjondolo movement is described by Marie Huchzermeyer as ‘invok[ing] an explicitly Lefebvrian right to the city in its urban struggles.’ Recht auf Stadt is a Hamburg-based initiative that credits Lefebvre as its inspiration. Merrifield discusses RTS pp. 53-58.

<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell (London: Bloomsbury Academic for the Arden Shakespeare, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Shakespeare’s Augustinian pessimism about human nature, see John Gillies, “The Question of Original Sin in *Hamlet*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64 (2013): 396-424.

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<sup>8</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Thomson Learning for the Arden Shakespeare, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Robert S. Miola, “*Julius Caesar* and the Tyrannicide Debate,” 288, *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 271-89.

<sup>10</sup> James Madison, ‘The Same Subject Continued with the Same Subject and Concluded’ (Federalist 51), in John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin, 1987 [1788]), pp. 318-22 (p. 319).

<sup>11</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), § 178, p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Taylor, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25–73 (p. 32).

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, ‘Politics of Recognition’, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992), xix.

<sup>15</sup> Fukuyama, *End of History*, p. 144.

<sup>16</sup> Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), p. 163.

<sup>17</sup> Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. Peter Holland (London: Bloomsbury Academic for the Arden Shakespeare, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 1986-2129.

<sup>20</sup> Henri Lefebvre, ‘The Other Parises’, in *Key Writings*, eds. Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas and Eleanore Kofman (New York; London: Continuum, 2003), p. 154.

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<sup>21</sup> Henri Lefebvre, 'No Salvation away from the Center?', in Lefebvre, *Writing on Cities*, p. 208.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jan/25/its-like-a-ghost-town-lights-go-out-as-foreign-owners-desert-london-homes> ; <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jan/25/its-like-a-ghost-town-lights-go-out-as-foreign-owners-desert-london-homes> .

<sup>23</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 113. Originally published as *La Révolution Urbaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *La Proclamation de la Commune* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> Lefebvre, *Proclamation*, p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Revolution*, trans. Alfred Ehrenfeld (New York: Modern Reader, [1968] 1969), p. 118.

<sup>27</sup> Lefebvre, *Explosion*, p. 117–18.

<sup>28</sup> Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, pp. 77, 100; cited in Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, p. 101: 'the city is an *oeuvre*, closer to a work of art than to a simple material product'.

<sup>30</sup> Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, p. 195.

<sup>31</sup> Mario Rui Martins, "The Theory of Social Space in the Work of Henri Lefebvre," in *Urban Political Economy and Social Theory: Critical Essays in Urban Studies*, eds. Ray Forrest, Jeff Henderson, and Peter Williams (Aldershot: Gower, 1982), pp. 160-85 (p. 183).

<sup>32</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production*, trans. Frank Bryant (London: Allison & Busby, 1976), p. 120.

<sup>33</sup> Henri Lefebvre, 'Comments on a New State Form' in *State, Space, World*, p. 135.

<sup>34</sup> Henri Lefebvre, 'Theoretical Problems of Autogestion' in *State, Space, World*, p. 150.

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<sup>35</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Rabelais* (Anthropos: Paris, 2001 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1955]), p. 213, 113-14.

<sup>36</sup> François Rabelais, *The Very Horrific Life of the Great Gargantua, Father of Pantagruel*, in *The Complete Works of François Rabelais*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1991) pp. 1-131 (p. 126).

<sup>37</sup> For more detailed discussion of this line, see esp. Gillies, 'The Question of Original Sin in *Hamlet*', 405-6.

<sup>38</sup> 2 Peter 2:22; cp. Proverbs 26:11. Quoted from the 1599 Geneva Bible.

<sup>39</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed., trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 406. Rousseau's counterfactual here is the likely source for Madison's in Federalist 51, as well as Kant's in the first supplement to his *Perpetual Peace* (8.366). For the genealogy of allusion, see W. Ossipow, 'Kant's *Perpetual Peace* and its Hidden Sources: A Textual Approach', *Swiss Political Science Review* 14 (2008), pp. 357-89 (p. 374).

<sup>40</sup> Merrifield, *Lefebvre*, xxvi.

<sup>41</sup> Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life Volume 1: Introduction*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1991 [1958]), p. 202.

<sup>42</sup> Lefebvre, *La Proclamation de la Commune* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), pp. 20-21.

<sup>43</sup> *Holinshed's Chronicle: As Used in Shakespeare's Plays*, eds. Allardyce and Josephine Nicoll (London: Dent, 1965), pp. 113, 116.

<sup>44</sup> *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 116.

<sup>45</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. 178.

<sup>46</sup> Brents Stirling, *The Populace in Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 22-3.

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<sup>47</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 2*, ed. Roland Knowles (London: Thomson Learning for the Arden Shakespeare, 2001), 4.7.11–13.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Wilson, *Will Power* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> Francois Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 251.

<sup>50</sup> Michel de Montaigne, 'That the taste of good and evil depends in large part on the opinion we have of them', in Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), pp. 33-47 (p. 43).

<sup>51</sup> Buchanan Sharp, *In Contempt of all Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586-1660* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), p. 10; cp. Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003 [1982]), pp. 173-4.

<sup>52</sup> Alan Everitt, 'Farm Labourers, 1500-1640,' in *Rural Society: Landowners, Peasants, and Labourers, 1500-1750*, ed. Christopher Clay. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 161-230 (pp. 168-70).

<sup>53</sup> Roger B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, Vol III*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 132.

<sup>55</sup> Yves-Marie Bercé, *Revolt and Revolution in Early Modern Europe: An Essay on the History of Political Violence*, trans. Joseph Bergin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, [1980] 1987), p. 221.

<sup>56</sup> Chris Butler, *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 13–14.

<sup>57</sup> Lefebvre, *Everyday Life*, p. 177.

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<sup>58</sup> Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Mulligan (Moscow: Progress, 1959), p. 117.

<sup>59</sup> Lefebvre, *Everyday Life*, p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> Lefebvre, 'Toward a Leftist Cultural Politics: Remarks Occasioned by the Centenary of Marx's Death', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 75–88 (p. 78).

<sup>61</sup> Lefebvre, *Everyday Life*, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism* (London: Cape, 1968), p. 162.

<sup>63</sup> Merrifield, *Lefebvre*, p. 162.

<sup>64</sup> Patricia Latour, Francis Combes, and Henri Lefebvre, *Conversation avec Henri Lefebvre* (Paris: Messidor, 1991), p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Emphasis for all passages from Hegel is in the original. 'R' signifies one of Hegel's written remarks, 'A' signifies an addition stemming from the lecture notes of his students.

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, 'Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion,' in *Representing the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 1-30 (p. 23).

<sup>67</sup> Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 216-7.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 212, 216.

<sup>69</sup> Chris Fitter, 'Emergent Shakespeare and the Politics of Protest: 2 *Henry VI* in Historical Contexts', *English Literary History* 72 (2005), pp. 129-158 (p. 143). Cp. Fitter, "'Your Captain is Brave and Vows Reformation": Jack Cade, the Hacket Rising, and Shakespeare's

Vision of Popular Rebellion', *Shakespeare Studies* 32 (2004), pp. 173-219, as well as Fitter, *Radical Shakespeare: Politics and Stagecraft in the Early Career* (New York: Routledge, 2012). See also Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1989). For a closer analogue of our own sense of Shakespeare's ambivalence about social class, as well as his misgivings about democracy, see in contrast, e.g. a much older essay: Alfred H. Tolman, "Is Shakespeare Aristocratic?" *PMLA* 29 (1914): 277-98. Tolman writes in what seems now a dated, belletristic style, but the essay is intriguing and incisive, nonetheless.

<sup>70</sup> Ronda Arab, 'Ruthless Power and Ambivalent Glory: The Rebel-Labourer in 2 *Henry VI*,' *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5 (2005), pp. 5-36 (pp. 6-7).

<sup>71</sup> Michael Hattaway, 'Introduction,' *The Second Part of King Henry VI* by William Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 31; cited in Arab, 'Rebel-Labourer,' 27 n. 3.

<sup>72</sup> For a helpful review and critique of extant literature on Hegel's position on poverty, see esp. Thom Brooks, 'Hegel and the Problem of Poverty,' *Kilikya Felsefe Dergisi* (Cilicia Journal of Philosophy) 2 (2015), pp. 1-9.

<sup>73</sup> Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Recognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 219.

<sup>74</sup> 'Persistent scarcity was the background to continual violence'. P.A Brunt, 'The Roman Mob', *Past and Present* 35 (1966), pp 3-27 (pp. 25-6).

<sup>75</sup> Brunt, 'Roman Mob', pp. 4, 7.

<sup>76</sup> Brunt, 'Roman Mob', p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas W. Africa, 'Urban Violence in Imperial Rome', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2 (1971), pp. 3-21 (p. 4).

<sup>78</sup> Africa, 'Urban Violence', p. 11.

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<sup>79</sup> *Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields: Memoirs by Survivors*, ed. Dith Pran (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 13.

<sup>80</sup> I. M. W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 75.

<sup>81</sup> David Cressy, *Literacy and Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 17–19.

<sup>82</sup> Thom Brooks, *Hegel's Political Philosophy: A Systematic Reading of the Philosophy of Right* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 126.

<sup>83</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right* § 145R, p. 269.

<sup>84</sup> Plutarch, 'Life of Brutus', trans. Thomas North; cited in *Julius Caesar*, ed. Daniell, p. 330.

<sup>85</sup> Plutarch, 'Life of Brutus', trans. Thomas North; cited in *Julius Caesar*, ed. Daniell, p. 343.

<sup>86</sup> Patrick Gray, 'The Compassionate Stoic: Brutus as Accidental Hero,' *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 150 (2016): 30-44.

<sup>87</sup> Andrew Hadfield acknowledges the pervasiveness of this ideal, albeit somewhat grudgingly, as the starting point for a detailed discussion of its reception in Elizabethan England: "Certainly, it is true that the notion of the 'mixed constitution' was an ubiquitous cliché, which very few thinkers tried to challenge, and which dominated much European political thought from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In England it could easily be derived from native traditions as well as classical republican thought." See Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 22 ff.

<sup>88</sup> For an opposed reading of Shakespeare as republican, at least in his early plays, see especially Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*. For a sympathetic overview of this and other recent work arguing that Shakespeare may have been opposed to hereditary monarchy, see Anthony DiMatteo, "Was Shakespeare a Republican? A Review Essay," *College Literature* 34 (2007): 196-212. Cf. in addition Fitter, *Radical Shakespeare*, and Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*.



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<sup>89</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, p. 474.

<sup>90</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 2*, ed. A. R. Humphreys (London: Bloomsbury Academic for the Arden Shakespeare, 2014 [1967]).

<sup>91</sup> Roger Paulin, *The Critical Reception of Shakespeare in Germany 1682-1914: Native Literature and Foreign Genius* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2003), p. 400; cp. G. W. F. Hegel, *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 3–7.